

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Date: May 06, 2016 8:00 PM CST

The Bell County Public Health District would like to advise the Bell County community regarding the recent TB exposure at KISD. The Health District, on any given day, investigates multiple positive TB tests. They are not aware of any positive tests that are directly linked to the recent exposure at KISD. If it is found that there are positive test results from this recent exposure, this information will only be shared with the patient and their parents. Test results of any kind are not released to the school district or anyone else because of confidentiality laws.

Here are some facts you should know about TB infections and active TB cases:

Tuberculosis is caused by bacteria that are spread from person to person through microscopic droplets released into the air. This can happen when someone with the untreated, active form of tuberculosis coughs, speaks, sneezes, spits, laughs or sings.

Although tuberculosis is contagious, it is not easy to catch. You're much more likely to get tuberculosis from someone you live with or work closely with for at least 6 hours a day than from a stranger. Tuberculosis is treatable, whether it is TB infection or an active TB case.

Although your body may harbor the bacteria that cause tuberculosis, your immune system can usually prevent you from becoming sick. For this reason, doctors make a distinction between TB infection and an active TB case as described below:

- **TB infection:** In this condition, you have a positive TB test, no symptoms, and a negative chest X-ray. A positive TB test means that a person has been exposed to the TB germ at some point in their life. A positive test does not necessarily mean the infection came from a recent exposure. With a TB infection, the bacteria remain in your body in an inactive state and cause no symptoms. TB infection is not contagious; however, it can turn into active TB if left untreated. Treatment to kill the infection is important to help control the spread of TB. Most people are not aware that they are infected with the TB germ unless they get a TB test.
- **Active TB case:** A person with this condition has symptoms (see below), is very sick, and can spread the infection to others. Active TB can occur in the first few weeks after infection, or it might occur years later. Active TB occurs in someone with an untreated TB infection.

Signs and symptoms of active TB include:

- Coughing that lasts three or more weeks
- Coughing up blood
- Chest pain, or pain with breathing or coughing
- Unintentional weight loss
- Fatigue
- Fever
- Night sweats
- Chills
- Loss of appetite

Bell County Public Health District has a TB team who regularly works to investigate exposures and active TB cases in the Bell County community. With regard to the recent exposure at KISD, individuals who have been contacted need to know that this is not an emergent situation; please obtain TB testing within the next 2-3 weeks. For those who have medical coverage, please make an appointment with your healthcare provider and take your letter with you. For those who do not have insurance, call the Health District Temple Clinic at 254-778-4766 to schedule an appointment for free testing. The Health District has Tuberculosis nurses available to answer questions, please call the Temple Clinic at 254-778-4766, Monday-Thursday 7am – 4:30 pm, and Friday 7-11am.

Gene Mikeska, MPH, PIO
Bell County Public Health District